

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE
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October 1975

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ADVANCE FACT SHEET

EXHIBITION: Johann Liss

DATES: December 17, 1975 through March 7, 1976

SIGNIFICANCE: This international loan exhibition is the first to fully survey the work of Johann Liss, an influential, but little studied German Baroque painter who died in mid-career in the early 17th century.

Liss, born in Holstein, Germany, around 1597, studied and worked in the Netherlands and Rome before settling in Venice around 1625. Absorbing influences from Dutch, German, Flemish, and Italian sources, he developed a highly individual style which in its maturity anticipated 18th century rococo art and greatly influenced artists of his own time and the following generation. His promising career ended abruptly with his death in the plague which ravaged Venice in 1629.

Although Liss's works were widely admired in the 17th and 18th centuries, by the 19th century they were hardly known, partly because of a change in taste, but also because they had become confused with the works of other artists. Liss was rediscovered only about sixty years ago, when there was a revival of interest in baroque art. At the same time, museums began to collect some works by Liss which had been held in private collections, and which, in some cases, had been attributed erroneously to other artists.

The discovery in recent decades of several previously unknown works by Liss has generated new inquiries into his artistic development. The results of this latest research are presented for the first time in this exhibition.

AUSPICES
AND SUPPORT:

The exhibition has been organized by The Cleveland Museum of Art in conjunction with the Städtische Kunstsammlungen in Augsburg, Germany, and is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. It opened for European showing August 2 in Augsburg, and will continue on view there through November 2.

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CONTENT:

Almost all of Liss's known works will be on view--approximately 40 paintings and 15 prints and drawings loaned from museums and private collections in Europe and America. Also in the exhibition are prints and drawings by artists who copied works by Liss, including some now lost. A special study section illustrates--with the aid of enlarged photographs and related paintings and graphics--the places and artists that affected Liss's development, the sources of his inspiration, and his influence on other artists.

The exhibition traces the extraordinary evolution of Liss's style during a career that lasted no more than fifteen years. His early paintings, such as The Gallant Couple and the Peasant Brawl, executed in Haarlem and Amsterdam, emulate the themes of Dutch and German artists. In Antwerp, where he was exposed to the style of Rubens and Jacob Jordaens, he produced his first important painting of an entirely individual character, the large half-length figure composition, Satyr and Peasant. The works of his Roman years, particularly the large and provocative Banquet of Soldiers and Courtesans, exemplify the new realism propagated by Caravaggio and his followers.

Works of a completely different character--mythological paintings depicting nudes in landscape settings--show contacts with Adam Elsheimer and the circle of Annibale Carracci. Among this group are the Fall of Phaeton, discovered just 30 years ago, and the Toilet of Venus (illustrated on the exhibition poster), whose light color scheme foreshadows Liss's mature Venetian works.

In Venice, inspired by the works of Titian, Tintoretto, and Domenico Fetti, Liss developed a highly original style which went far beyond that of his contemporaries. The late paintings of this period, the Ecstasy of St. Paul and the Vision of St. Jerome, exhibit a loose brushwork and luminosity and delicacy of color which anticipate rococo painting by nearly a century.

To meet the demands of collectors, Liss repeated some of his paintings several times, often with remarkable exactness. In the exhibition viewers will have an opportunity to study multiple versions of the artist's paintings side by side.

LENDERS:

Approximately one-third of the works in the exhibition are from German collections, including museums in Berlin, Bremen, Kassel, Munich, and Nürnberg. Important loans are also coming from private collections and museums in ten other European countries, the United States and Argentina, including the State Museum of Dresden, the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille, France, the Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice, and the National Gallery in Washington. Liss's Vision of St. Jerome, a large altarpiece commissioned for the Church of S. Nicolò da Tolentino in Venice, was loaned by permission of the Vatican.

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PUBLICATIONS: All of the known works by Liss, including several paintings that proved too difficult to borrow for the exhibition, are illustrated in a scholarly catalogue published in both German and English editions. Dr. Rüdiger Klessmann, Director of the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig, Germany, contributes an essay on Liss's early years in the Netherlands and Rome; Ann Tzeutschler Lurie, Associate Curator of Paintings at the Cleveland Museum, describes the artist's years in Venice; Louise S. Richards, Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Cleveland Museum, provides comments on the graphic works; and Dr. Bruno Bushart, Director of the Augsburg Städtische Kunstsammlungen, examines Liss's ties to German art. Rolf Biedermann, in charge of prints and drawings at the Augsburg museum, organized the study section for both the exhibition and the catalogue.

The catalogue contains approximately 200 text pages, 179 black and white illustrations, and 10 color plates.

The December issue of The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art will contain a scholarly article by Ann Tzeutschler Lurie on Amor Vincit, the Liss painting owned by the Cleveland Museum.

**EXHIBITION
LECTURES:**

Dr. Rüdiger Klessmann will talk on the life and work of Johann Liss at a preview of the exhibition for Cleveland Museum members on Tuesday, December 16, at 5:30 p.m. He will give a second, public lecture, entitled "Liss Problems," on Wednesday, December 17, at 5:30 p.m.

Gallery talks and audio-visual programs are also scheduled during the duration of the exhibition.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact Ann Edwards or Frances Stamper, Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; (216) 421-7340.